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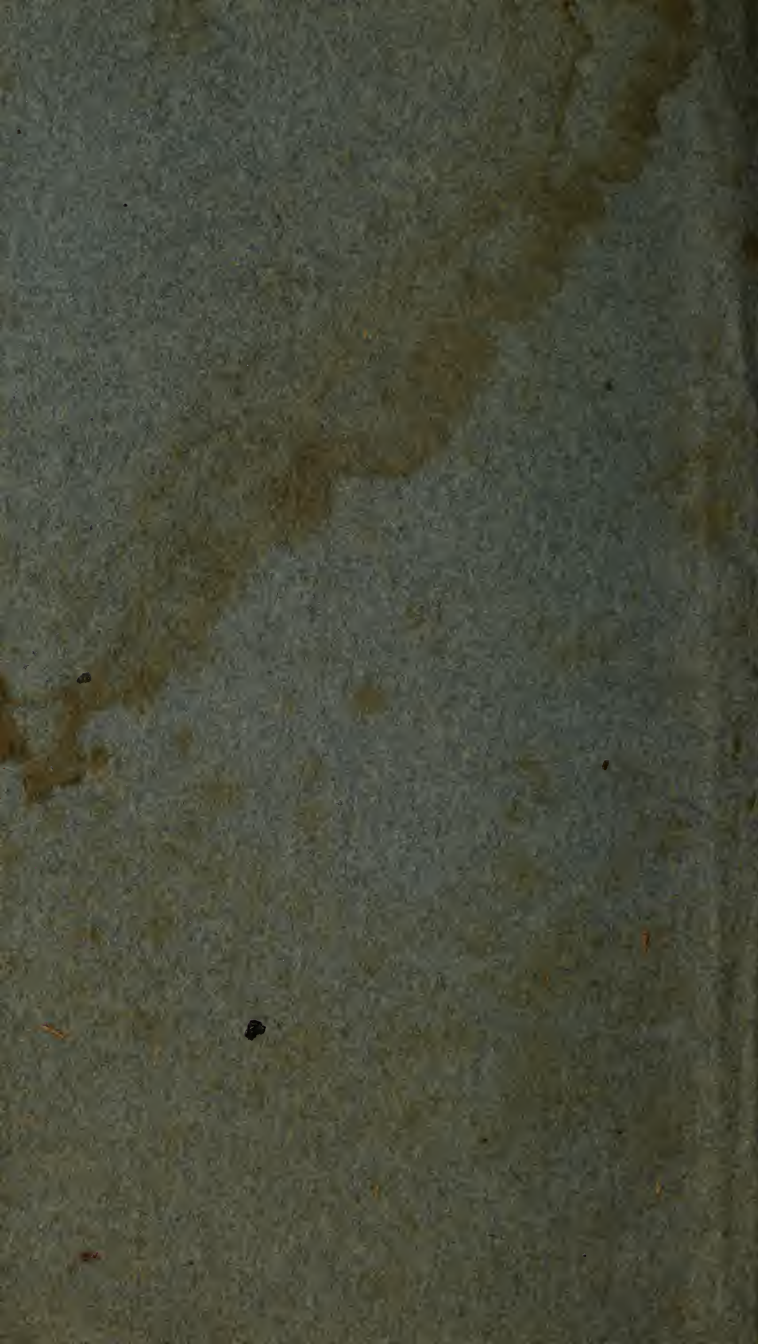
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Letters on Baptism

by

George Watson



LETTERS

ON THE SUBJECT OF

BAPTISM.

BY

GEO. WATSON, BAPTIST PREACHER,

Addressed to the People of Dalhousie,

Sherbrooke and Lanark.

BEING A

REPLY TO A PAMPHLET ON

INFANT BAPTISM,

ADDRESSED TO THEM BY THE REVEREND DOCTOR

GEMMILL, OF LANARK.

PERTH:

Printed at the Bathurst Courier Office.

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TO THE

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M O T T O—

“Fair discussion is the hand-maid of Truth.”

PREFACE TO THE READER.

THE following sheets were written some years ago, in reply to a certain pamphlet published in Lanark in the year 18 by the Rev. Dr. GEMMILL, and was then intended for the press, —but unavoidable difficulties prevented its publication to the present time. The author has no pretensions to originality of thought, nor ~~eloquence~~ *eloquence* in diction,—and his only object is to illicit truth. He has simply followed the scriptures, and some who have already candidly written upon them. And all he wishes from his readers, is a fair and candid comparison of his statements with the general scope and bearing of the scriptures on the subject.

Should these sheets be favourably received by the public, they will be followed in the spring, by a few letters on primitive christianity addressed to a friend.

G. W.

LETTER I.

SIR,—

According to your doctrine, the turning point in the Baptist controversy rests upon arguments deduced from the covenant made with Abraham. You say that "the reasoning on this head goes on the ground that it was a covenant of grace—and the same in substance with that which we are now under, in the gospel dispensation. Unless it be so, the reasoning is certainly very inconclusive on this head; but if it really be so, thought to be looked upon as a grand turning point in this controversy." If the covenant made with Abraham was the same in substance, as the covenant of grace, under the gospel dispensation, it must be the new covenant spoken of by Paul, Hebrews viii. chap. and 8th verse, "Behold, the days shall come, saith the Lord, when I will make a *new covenant* with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah." Hence, all the promises and all the privileges of that covenant, must be sure to the parties concerned in it: for God is not a man that he should lie,—nor the son of man that he should repent. If, then, the descendants of Abraham are included in this covenant, and along with them the offspring of believers, as you affirm, it follows as a matter of course that *all* who are born of believing parents are baptised in infancy, must be saved. Because, if all the children of believing parents, who are baptised in infancy, along with the natural seed of Abraham are not saved, the covenant made with Abraham, namely, the covenant of circumcision was not the covenant of grace,—for were it otherwise, those who perish could not be included in that covenant. Either side, however, of the alternative, completely overthrows all your arguments. That the former position cannot be maintained, is evident, for it is contrary to scripture, and opposed to the experience of all ages of the church. The latter position is equally untenable, because in direct variance with the whole tenor of the covenant. The covenant made with Abraham, therefore, is not the covenant of grace, nor in substance is it the same. This is further evident from this consideration, that, you have not been able to produce a single passage, in which the covenant of circumcision is called the covenant of grace; nor can you point out a text, in which the temporal blessings given to Abraham are mentioned in the covenant of grace; nor can you show (even admitting the term to be identical) how Melchisedec, Lot and others, should be included in the covenant of grace, which none will deny—and yet were not in the covenant of circumcision; or

how Ishmael and Esau should be in the covenant of circumcision, yet had no portion in the covenant of grace. Nor is it possible for you to obviate the difficulty, that if Abraham be the federal head of his natural and spiritual seed, or of the covenant of grace, whilst Christ is confessedly the head of the same covenant, there must be two heads of that covenant, having as such, conflicting titles to superiority. This is the first and great mistake respecting the covenant itself, which perplexes the whole subject,—corrupts all the subsequent reasoning, and confounds things which are essentially different.

Your third and fourth arguments stand thus. "We are told by the Apostle that the covenant made with Abraham was confirmed of God in Christ, Gal. iii. chap. 17th verse, hence the covenant made with Abraham was the covenant of grace. 4th, —It is clear, all believers under the gospel are justified by faith, and the Apostle tells us that in this Abraham was justified." Romans iv. chap. and 3d verse. No covenant did or could admit of justification by faith, except the covenant of grace." Here, I would ask, whether the covenant made with Abraham many years before the covenant of circumcision, namely, that of which the Apostle speaks, as confirmed of God in Christ, four hundred and thirty years before the Law, and which expressly secured spiritual blessings, was the same as the covenant of circumcision which expressly limits its stipulations to temporal blessings? It would be a most extraordinary and unparalleled circumstance, if one covenant should be deemed identical with another, which omits the most desirable and most important of all its promises. Your constant averment, that the communications made to Abraham were substantially the same, is contrary to scripture, for the Apostle does not speak of them as the covenant, but uses the plural number—*covenants*, and *covenants of promise*. Rom. ix. chap. 4th verse, Eph. ii. chap. 12th verse.

Let the reader peruse with attention the covenant of circumcision, recorded in Gen xvii. chap 2, 4, 7, 10, and 14 verses. Let him discover if he can, the clause "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed." This was expressed only in the first promise to Abraham, which was a republication of the same prediction given to Adam, and of the covenant made with Noah, whose names were thenceforth merged in that of Abraham, the spiritual representative of future believers, through his blessing God, which was accounted to him for righteousness;—a description applied to him with reference to a period long prior to the command respecting circumcision. To employ then, the phrase Abrahamic Covenant, as expressive of two distinct covenants, made at two different, nay, distant periods, and for different purposes, is a manifest confusion of language and misrepresentation of scripture, and to affirm that the covenant of circumcision includes both the temporal and the spiritual promises—when it is obvious that the spiritual promise is entirely exclu-

ded from its stipulations, is a direct contradiction of the sacred record.

But if believers are justified by the covenant of grace, through the blood of Christ by which it was ratified. By what covenant was Abraham justified? Was it not by faith in the same covenant? The Apostle tells us, that the gospel was preached to him, so that he saw the day of Christ through the glorious prediction, "That in him all nations should be blessed," and he was glad. If so, then the covenant of grace and the covenant of circumcision were not the same, for none will presume to say, that Abraham was justified by circumcision. "Know ye therefore, that they which are of faith, are the children of Abraham." And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, in thee shall all nations of the earth be blessed; so then they which be of faith are blessed with faithful Abraham." Gal. iii. chap. 17th verse. Were they who are described of faith, natural descendants of Abraham according to the flesh? Are the children of eight days old, and the spiritual children by faith, the same seed? Are the children of eight days old promised heaven? Or are the generations of believers promised the earthly land of Canaan? If not, what becomes of your assertion, that the Abrahamic covenant, and the covenant of grace, under which we now live are the same in substance?

The language of Venoma a celebrated Pædobaptist commentator is very important and expressive on this subject. "Select works, lib. 1st. Celestial prerogatives cannot be transmitted from parents to children, nor can that idea be rendered consistent either with the economy of grace or the justice of God." "No one is sanctified to the Lord for the sake of another, none—not infants in virtue of their descent from believers; for this the scriptures no where affirm, nor is it consistent with reason."—Dr. Owen on the Epistle to the Hebrews, is very explicit, "Two privileges did God grant unto Abraham, upon his separation to a special interest in the promise and covenant. First. That according to the flesh he should be the Father of the Messiah the promised seed, who was the very life of the covenant,—the fountain and cause of all the blessings contained in it. That this privilege was temporary, the thing itself doth demonstrate. Secondly, Together with this he had also another privilege granted unto him, namely, that his faith whereby he was personally interested in the covenant, should be the pattern of the faith of the church in all generations, and that none should even come to be a member of it, or share in its blessings, but by the same faith, that he had fixed on the seed that was in the promise to be brought forth from him in the world; or the account of this privilege he became the father of all them that do believe; for they that are of the faith the same are the children of Abraham Gal. iii. chap 17th verse. Romans iv chap 11th

verse, as also heirs of the world. Romans iv chap 15th verse, in that all who should believe throughout the world, being thereby implanted into the covenant made with him, should become his spirit children. Answerable unto this twofold end of the separation of Abraham, there was a double seed allotted him; a seed according to the flesh, and a seed according to the promise, viz: such as by faith should have an interest in the promise." According to these authors, reason and revelation unite in refusing their aid to your position, that the covenant of circumcision is the covenant of grace. It follows therefore, that your reasoning founded upon that position must be indeed, very inconclusive.

Yours, &c.

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LETTER II.

SIR,—

Having in my last letter examined what you call the turning point in this controversy, I purpose in this to try the weight of your arguments drawn from circumcision's being a seal of the *same* covenant. Vide page 6, ii.

You say "Circumcision was a seal of the covenant of grace, and was a divine appointment administered to infants." "That it was the token or seal of Abraham's covenant is evident from the very first institution of it, Gen xvii chap 10th verse. And the Apostle tells us expressly Roman iv chap 11th verse, that Abraham received the sign of circumcision a seal &c." Now although circumcision is indeed called a seal of the righteousness of the faith, yet it was only a seal to Abraham of his own faith, even the faith which he had before circumcision. This seal he received in his peculiar patriarchal capacity, and that only as the father of the faithful. For the Apostle says Romans vi chap 11 and 12 verses, "He received the sign of circumcision a seal of the righteousness of the faith, which he had being yet uncircumcised." For what end? That he might be father of all, his fleshly circumcised seed. No! for the Apostle says, "That he might be the father of all them that believe, though they be not circumcised, and the father of circumcision to them [of his natural seed] who are not of the circumcision only, but also walk in the steps of that faith, of our father Abraham, which he had being uncircumcised," that is, that he might be the father of all who believe, whether circumcised or not. Now if Abraham was not a father to his natural seed, in that capacity in which circumcision sealed or confirmed to him the righteousness of his faith, then circumcision was not a seal of the righteousness of faith to his natural seed; nor could it be, to infants of eight days old, who had not that faith, before circumcision; but respected only the temporal promise and relation which had

a typical reference to the eternal promise and the spiritual relation arising from it.

Again in page 9, you affirm, "If infant church membership then was no absurdity, it cannot be now. If children were in covenant in Abraham's days, they are so still, unless we can find that God has excluded them."

In answer to this, I would remark, Sir, that our Lord's kingdom being spiritual, his dominion respects only the understanding and the heart, and none were considered members of the first churches, but such as gave evidence that they believed the gospel. Rom. i. chap 7th verse, and first Cor. i. chap 2d verse. In accordance with this, I shall add a few quotations from Pædobaptists, Dr. Chauncy says, "The fundamental part of a visible church, is the credible profession of faith and holiness; it is men and women, not doctrine, that is the matter of a church,—and these professing faith and practising holiness: the members of churches are always called in the New Testament, saints, faithful believers." Preface to Dr. Owen's true nature of a gospel church. Dr. Cotton Mather says, "A church, as the Greek name implies, for it allows us, to think, is to consist of a people called out from the ways of sin by the powerful, and effectual work of God upon their souls. Regeneration is the thing, without which, a title to the sacraments, is not to be pretended. Real regeneration is the thing, which, before God renders men capable of claiming sacraments, and visible and expressed regeneration, is that which before men enables us to make such a claim." Bacher's church history of New England, vol. ii, page 2. I might multiply similar quotations, but thinking it unnecessary, I shall only observe, that these authorities do not permit us to consider infants as members of a gospel church, either before or after baptism.

Where, Sir, in the New Testament are we informed of members of a christian church, who neither did profess, nor were capable of professing faith in the son of God? If the infant offspring of church members be the subjects of our Lord's kingdom from their birth, they must be so by virtue of carnal covenants, just as the children of Englishmen are born subjects of the British crown. And if infants of christians are born *christians*, then are they *christians* by nature, and not the children of wrath even as others. Nor indeed can I conceive, how upon your own principles, you can preach the doctrine of conversion, when you esteem those to whom you preach, already converted and members of Christ's church. If you deny these consequences it must imply a belief that a person may be a true subject of our Lord's kingdom without being a christian, which is preposterous. That the children of the Jews under the former economy, were born members of the Church, is readily granted, but *this* was one of those peculiarities, which, as Dr. Cox observes belonged to the national and typical church state of that people; which

state by the gospel is dissolved, and is so incompatible with the ministrations of it that the introduction of the latter necessarily infers the abolition of the former, and therefore, this right and privilege of the Jews, which were the very foundation of their national church state as separated from the Gentiles, cannot be transferred into the gospel dispensation because it is inconsistent with it. Besides it is evident throughout the whole gospel, that right of membership in the Jewish church, could never give to any, either infant or adult a like right of membership in the gospel church; nor was there even any one received thereinto, because he had such a right according to the state of the old covenant, and there is good reason to conclude, that the carnal seed of believers can derive no higher privilege from the covenant of circumcision than the carnal seed of Abraham obtained thereby. And if it could not bring the one into the gospel church, nor give them a right to baptism, without repentance and faith, it can by no means do so, for the other, although we should suppose them concerned in it, as indeed they are not. Dis. cov. p. 159, 160.

Again in page 10, you say, "Baptism is a seal of the same covenant made with Abraham, instituted in the room of circumcision, and therefore ought to be administered to the children of professed believers." Even supposing it were clearly evinced, that all the children of believers are interested in the covenant of grace, it would not necessarily follow, that they are entitled to baptism, this being a branch of positive worship, depending entirely upon the sovereign will of its author—and *his will* having been revealed by positive precepts, or by Apostolic examples is the only rule for the administration of baptism.

Mr. Baxter, a Pædobaptist, has justly observed, that even in Abraham's time, circumcision was not made necessary to all the church, but only to Abraham's family. Shem and his family who were then living were not so much as commanded to be baptised. Not Melchisedec or any of the subjects over whom he reigned, or any of that church to whom he was Priest. It plainly appears, therefore, that as a positive divine command made it necessary, for multitudes to be circumcised, who had no interest in the covenant of grace, so at the commencement of circumcision many were interested in that benign constitution who were under no obligation to be circumcised, nor had any claim to the distinguished mark. So far is it from being a fact, that interest in the new covenant, and a title to positive institutes, may be inferred, the one from the other. This being the case, we may safely conclude, that all reasoning from data of a moral kind, and the supposed fitness of things, or from the natural relation of children to parents is wide off the mark.

That the title of infants to baptism, cannot be justly inferred from the absolute rite of circumcision, will further appear from the due consideration of what follows, namely, that baptism is an appointment purely religious, and intended for purposes entirely spiritual, while circumcision, besides the spiritual instruction which it suggested, was a sign of carnal descent,—a mark of national distinction, and a token of interest in those temporal blessings, that were promised to Abraham.

Dr. Erskine in Theological Dissert. p. 9, says, "When God promised the Land of Canaan to Abraham and his seed, circumcision was

instituted for this among other purposes, to show that descent from Abraham was the foundation of his posterity's right to those blessings." Mr.

writes thus on the same subject. "Circumcision was the sign of a covenant which God undoubtedly made with Abraham and his family only, exclusive of other nations, and a seal of those benefits which he intended to be peculiar to Abraham's posterity, and therefore according to divine appointment, it was used to distinguish the seed of Abraham from the nations of the world." *Ægypt. lib. iii. chap. 4, s. 5.*

In page 11th you say, "Baptism signifies the same thing with circumcision, and afterwards draw your conclusion by saying, "May we not, therefore conclude, that baptism was instituted in its room." Before Sir, you drew such a conclusion, it was meet for you to establish and prove your premises that baptism came in the room of circumcision, and signifies the same thing, which you have not done; nor indeed is there a sentence in the whole scriptures which can support these positions. If, therefore, your premises be unfounded, your conclusion will be false and they must fall together. Besides, if circumcision signifies the same thing as baptism, why set aside the one and institute the other. As baptism, however, is an institution of the kingdom of heaven, we can learn its signification no where but from the new testament, and here I conceive we are taught that it exhibits the death, burial and resurrection of Christ whereby He fulfilled all righteousness; together with the believers communion with Christ, and conformity to him in that sacrament. This the apostle declares and chiefly insists upon. "Know you not, that so many of us as were baptised into Jesus Christ, were baptised into his death; therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death, that like as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk with him in newness of life. Rom. vi. chap. 3, 4th verses. The same view of it is contained in Col. xi chap. 12, and 13 verse. "Buried with him in baptism, wherein also ye are risen through the faith of the operation of God who had raised him from the dead." "And you being dead in sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh hath he quickened together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses."

From these passages we learn that baptism represents Christ's death, burial and resurrection, and so exhibits in a figure, what the gospel declares by way of testimony, namely, "that he was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." In confirmation of this explanation of these passages, I shall here cite, a few learned Pædobaptist writers. Luther says, that "The minister dippeth a child into the water, signifieth death, that he again bringeth him out of it, signifieth life." So Saint Paul represents it. Rom. vi. chap. "Being moved by this reason, I would have those that are to be baptised to be entirely immersed as the word imports, and the mystery signifies." Vide Lutheric Catech, minor. Dr Whitby writes, "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism,—plunging under the water into a conformity to his death, which put his body under the earth, that like as he was raised up from the dead, by the glorious power of the Father; even so, we also thus dead in baptism, should rise with him and walk in newness of life. Paraph. on Rom. vi. ch. 4 v. Bishop Heally says, "This latter expression buried with Christ and rising with him, made

use of by St. Paul with relation to baptism, is taken from the custom of immersion in the first days, and from that particular manner of baptising proselytes, by which they were first covered with water, and in a state, as it were, of death and inactivity; and then arose out of it into a sort of new state of life and action. And if baptism had been then performed, as it is now amongst us, we should never have so much as heard of this form of expression, of dying and rising again in this rite. Works, vol. iii. p. 890. Agreeably to these Dr. Scott, Dr. Newton, and Dr. Baxter might be quoted.

In page 12th you allege, "If baptism does not come in the room of circumcision, then we have no ordinance answering to that Jewish rite, and consequently the christian church, by the coming of Christ, has been deprived of a sacrament which was reckoned of singular advantage to the Jewish dispensation; for the profit of circumcision, the Apostle asserts was much every way." The scripture, Sir, no where tells us that baptism came in the room of circumcision. Admitting for a moment it were so, how did it come that *both* were in full force at the same time? when as Dr. Owen observes, "The sign of what is to come is set aside when the thing signified is brought in." Dis. on Heb. vol. iii. p. 176. As to much profit arising from circumcision, the Apostle assures us, that the superior condition of the Jews, consisted in having the oracles of God committed to them. It may be supposed, however, that he would not have represented the possession of these oracles as the principal advantage enjoyed by them, if circumcision had been a seal of interest, in the covenant of grace to the Jews in common; for interest in that covenant being of such high importance, whatever sealed or confirmed it, must of all external advantages, have been the chief. As however, the Apostle would not allow the principal place to circumcision, among the prerogatives of Abraham's natural seed, there is reason to think, that he did not consider this painful rite as indicating and confirming their title to spiritual blessings; consequently your argument from this passage in favour of infant baptism is unfounded. Besides if circumcision was of such vast importance as to seal the blessings of the covenant of grace; what in the name of common sense became of the females, who had no such seal administered? were they cast out of the covenant? if not what sealed its blessings to them?

Yours, &c.

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LETTER III.

SIR,—

According to what you advance in page 13, "Infants are capable of spiritual benefits by baptism i. e. the things signified thereby; and accordingly ought to be baptised." Their capa-

bility. Sir, is no argument. Do they all appear to be born of the spirit? Does experience show it? Again you say, "Remission of sin, being a gracious act of God discharging a person from guilt, an infant is as capable of this act of favour as a grown up man." And in order to illustrate this you say, "suppose the King should send for a traitor's child out of the cradle, and before all his courtiers, declare, that whereas the blood of the child was attainted by his father's treason, and therefore according to law, its whole inheritance became forfeited to the crown. Yet, says the King, I will pardon this infant freely and restore him to all his forfeited rights; in token whereof, I command one of my Ministers, to wash this infant with pure water, signifying to all my subjects that he is cleansed from his attainder, and that I am perfectly reconciled with him. I ask now, whether any can truly say that, that action was insignificant to the child because he did not understand it; or will any say that the child was incapable of washing which was the sign, when it was capable of being acquitted of its attainder, which was the thing signified thereby; if then, infants are capable of remission of sins, surely they are capable of baptism, the token of remission which is the great truth this illustration was brought to prove." This supposition and the inference you draw from it, are unwarranted by scripture, for there is no passage in holy writ, in which the King of heaven has published a pardon to all the children of believers, and in order to signify this, to his subjects has commanded his Ministers to baptize them.

Your next argument in favour of infant baptism amounts to this, "God is able to regenerate infants, therefore they ought to be baptised." No man it is true, can deny, that God can of these stones raise up children to Abraham. But I ask, is this work of regeneration actually exerted, on all the infants of believers. Do not scripture and experience show that the children of believers upon whom this operation is exercised are comparatively few? How weak and trifling then, is such reasoning? According to this argument the whole human race may be baptised, for God is able to regenerate all mankind.

Again in page 14 you say, "Infants are capable of Christ's blessing on earth, and of enjoying his presence in heaven, and therefore may be baptised. Mark x ch. 16. v. And again, "Our Saviour baptised not any himself, therefore no wonder that he did not baptize infants; but his praying for them, his blessing them, and declaring that the kingdom of heaven belongs to them, was a great deal more than if he had baptised them." What has all this to do with the question at issue? Although he had given them heaven itself. Was *this* baptism the point to be proved. Either these infants were baptised, or they were not. If they were, the controversy is at an end. If they were not, then ought not infants now to be baptised. That they were

not then baptised is evident, because they were not brought to Christ for that purpose; but that he should put his hands upon them and pray for them. Jesus himself did not baptise them for he baptised none; nor did he order his disciples to do it; nor would they have forbidden infants to be brought to him had they known any thing about infant baptism. If, therefore, while Jesus was rebuking his disciples for forbidding infants to come to him; if he was declaring infants to be of his kingdom—taking them up in his arms and blessing them;—if while he had so fair an opportunity of being explicit as to their baptism, and of setting an example of it, which might have prevented all the disputes which he foresaw would arise on the subject. I say, if on such an occasion, he neither baptised them himself, nor commanded them to be baptised, nor even gave the least hint that they should be baptised. What can be reasonably inferred from all this, but that infant baptism is no institution of his, nor was ever intended by him. We may also learn from this passage, what some do not seem to understand, namely, that infants may be acknowledged of Christ's kingdom, brought unto him, and obtain his blessing without being baptised, see Math. xix c. 13 v. Mark x c. 14 v.

In one of your objections, page 15, you say "If they have a right to baptism, because Christ says of such is the kingdom of heaven, then they may as well have a right to the Lord's table. And you answer—not so; there is not the same reason for a particular qualification is required to fit a person for the Lord's table." Now, on this very ground, we refuse baptism to infants—for God hath said, "He that believeth and is baptised shall be saved." Then you proceed, "If the infants of christian parents are federally holy then they may be baptised, and that they are federally holy is clear from the scriptures, Romans xi, e. 16, "For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy; and if the root be holy, so are the branches. By the root we may understand Abraham and by the branches, his posterity. Now forasmuch as the Jews the natural branches are through unbelief broken off, and the believing Gentiles are grafted in their stead, and succeed in their privileges—if in this sense they are holy, so are we." On the explanation of this passage commentators differ. Dr. Doddridge thus expounds it, "For if the first fruits be holy, so is the lump." "The consecration of them was looked upon as in effect, the consecration of all. And so would I look upon the conversion of some few of the Jewish nation, as in earnest of the conversion of all the rest. And so much the rather when I consider, how eminently dear to God those pious patriarchs were from whom they have descended: for if the root be holy, the branches are likewise so, and will surely at length be regarded as such." Paraph. on text. Venema thus explains it, "The word holy, as here used, signifies the dedica-

sion of a thing, or of a person sacred to God. Now seeing the Jews that believed in the time of Paul, fitly answers to the first patriarchs. Especially Abraham, he considers them as a happy token and example, whence he might lawfully hope for the future conversion of the people; and that the moss and the branches, aid aside for the same use, should be gathered together, and, in their own time, become holy, like the first fruits and root, and be afresh implanted in their own olive tree, comment ad Mal iii. 23, 24, page 565.

Here it may be observed, that baptism is not the subject of St. Paul's discourse; it is not mentioned in the whole chapter, nor from any thing that appears, was it so much as thought of, by the apostle, much less infant baptism. True, the word *holy* is used, but according to those authors, and agreeably to the tenor of the subject, it is used in reference to the ancient patriarchs especially Abraham—to those converted Jews that were the first fruits of a christian ministry, and to the future conversion of Abraham's posterity in the latter days; so that the passage has no regard to any christian parent as a root, or to his infant offspring as branches arising from that root.

The next text you bring in aid is 1 Corinth. vii. ch. 140, "For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband, else were your children unclean but now are they holy. It has been objected, that a matrimonial holiness, or legitimacy is what is intended by the Apostle; but the explanation is neither pertinent nor true.

In page 18 you mention the same passage again, 1 Corinth. vii. c. 14 v. and you call it a remarkable passage, so indeed it is. If you will however be so good as to inform us, how an unbeliever can be sanctified by being connected with a believer; or what kind of sanctification it is—then it would be easy to tell you, the kind of holiness it is, of which the children of believers are possessed.

In your dissertation on baptism, two circumstances are too obvious to escape observation. The one is the bold and oracular tone, in which you announce your decisions on disputed passages, as if you spoke with the voice of inspiration. The Pope himself with all his infallibility, could not have pronounced a more oracular decision on a disputed text, than you have done upon this. Another prominent feature is the total want of charity, which breathes through the whole of it, towards those who happen to differ from you. 'Tis true, Anabaptists as you call them had no occasion to expect any great share of moderation or charity from you, seeing you consider them as no better than wicked heathens, having no interest in the blessings of the covenant. Surely however your well meaning though mistaken fellow creatures had a fair claim to a portion of your sympathy, for strange as it may appear, notwithstanding the sweeping sentence of

and this opinion is akin to an error of the Papists, who suppose that a congregation may be a true church, though destitute of holiness." Opera, Tom. i. p. 301.

From these quotations, we learn, that the sanctification of the unbelieving husband mentioned in the text, relates entirely to matrimonial commerce. That the holiness of children is not of an external kind, arising from an external economy, the new covenant being altogether spiritual and internal. That the holiness intended is legitimacy. That no holiness is here attributed to children which may not be ascribed to the unbelieving parent. Such being the sentiments of these Pædobaptists, concerning this remarkable passage, it will appear that this text affords no argument for infant baptism; and indeed whatever view may be taken of it, Baptists have nothing to fear when they recollect that the subject in dispute is a positive institution of the King of Heaven, for which they have his express precept, and the plain example of His Apostles for what they practise, and that the apostle in this place is not treating of baptism at all, notwithstanding the use you have made of it, in favour of infant baptism.

"In this" remarkable "text" you say page 18th, "The Apostle clearly proves the covenant interest of the infants of believing parents. It is beyond all possible contradiction clear from this text, that the children of believers are, in some sense or other holy, or saints, by virtue of their parent's faith." A little further on you tell us, that, "To be holy, must signify to be visibly interested in the covenant, or visibly to belong to God." And in page 16 you have told us, "That they are to be accounted visibly saints till they profess the contrary." Thus, the children of religious parents are taught as soon as they can pray at all, to lift up their hands in the presence of God, and to address him in the language of the modern Jew. "We are thy people, the children of thy covenant." They are implicitly directed to copy, with a confident front, an ancient example of prayer recorded by St. Luke, an example which tho' imitated by many is avowed by few. The purport of their language must be, we thank thee, O God, that we are not as the children of other men, who are not interested in thy covenant, having no share in thy promises, or any right in thy confirming seal." "We contemplate with peculiar pleasure, the vast difference there is between us, and the offspring of our profligate neighbours—the publicans!" Now, as these are the genuine consequences of your dictates on the subject, I may venture to appeal to the impartial reader, and ask, whether such sentiments imbibed by the children of Godly parents, are not adapted to harden their conscience in an unregenerated state, and to render them easy, under a vain supposition of their being from their earliest infancy, the favourites of heaven? When the last messenger knocks at the door, how frequently does the man, who has given the flood-tide of his affections to the world, console himself with the thought, that he was born of christian parents, had the seal of the covenant administered to him, by which he was made in *some sense* a saint, hat altho' his state

condemnation pronounced by you, a learned doctor of these enlightened days, against all who dare to entertain an opinion different from yourself, upon this disputed text; some of the ablest, pædobaptist commentators, have given a very different interpretation of this passage. Melancthon says, "Paul answers, that their marriages are not to be pulled asunder for their unlike opinions of God, if the pious person do not cast away the other; and for comfort he adds as a reason. The unbelieving husband is sanctified by a believing wife. Of which speech divers interpretations are made, but the true and natural is this, as elsewhere he saith meat is sanctified, for that which is holy in use, that is, granted to believers from God. So here he speaks the use of marriage to be holy, and to be granted of God. The conviction of the argument is this, if the use of marriage should not please God, your children would be bastards; therefore the use of marriage pleaseth God. Now bastards were unclean in a peculiar manner the law shows Deut. 23,—Let not a bastard enter into the congregation of the Lord to the tenth generation." cited in Terubess's exercitation, page 11.

Mr. Poole in continuaters writes, "The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, I rather think it signifies brought into such a state, that the believer without offence to the law of God may continue in a married state with such a yoke fellow, and the state of marriage is a holy state, notwithstanding the disparity with reference to religion." *And.* on the place.

Camerarius says, "The unbelieving husband hath been sanctified, that is sanctified in the lawful use of marriage, for without this, the Apostle says, the children would be unclean; that is, infamous, not being legitimate. Thus they are holy, that is, during the marriage, they are free from every spot of ignominy. In loc.

Dr. Whitby says, "By the wife, because of the wife, i. e. he is to be reputed as sanctified; because he is one flesh with her, that is holy; or we may take these words in the sense of the Greek interpreters, viz. "The unbelieving husband hath been sanctified to the believing wife, by his contract to cohabit with her, and to have seed by her. Amulation on the place. See also Lord Brooke Discour. on Episco. Sect. ii. ch. viii. p. 97, 98.

Velthuysius says, "Some think by that holiness mentioned in 1st Cor. vii. ch. 14 v. is to be understood such an external holiness as was that of the Israelites, and of the circumcised; which was possessed by an Israelite and Jew, even though his life made it appear that he was not a true Israelite, whose praise is not of man but of God. Now, those who are of this opinion suppose, that there is a kind of external covenant under the gospel; on account of which covenant, some are called holy, though nothing appears in their lives to prove them saints. But I see no intimation of this external covenant in the whole gospel;

and this opinion is akin to an error of the Papists, who suppose that a congregation may be a true church though destitute of holiness." Opera, Tom. i. p. 801.

From these quotations we learn, that the sanctification of the unbelieving husband, mentioned in the text, relates entirely to matrimonial commerce. That the holiness of the children is not of an external kind, arising from an external economy, the new covenant being altogether spiritual and internal. That the holiness intended is legitimacy. That no holiness is here attributed to children, which may not be ascribed to the unbelieving parent. Such being the sentiments of these Pædobaptists concerning this remarkable passage, it will appear that this text affords no argument for infant baptism, and indeed whatever view may be taken of it, Baptists have nothing to fear, when they recollect that the subject in dispute is a positive institution of the King of Heaven, for which they have his explicit precept, and the plain example of the His Apostles for what they practice, and that the Apostle in this place is not treating of baptism at all, notwithstanding the use you have made of it, in favour of infant baptism.

"In this" remarkable "text," you say page 18, "The Apostle clearly proves the covenant interest of the infants of believing parents. It is beyond all contradiction clear from this text, that the children of believers, are, in some sense or other, holy, or saints, by virtue of their parents faith." A little further on you tell us, that, "To be holy, must signify to be visibly interested in the covenant, or visibly to belong to God." And in page 16 you have told us, "That they are to be accounted visibly saints till they profess the contrary." Thus, the children of religious parents are taught, as soon as they can pray at all, to lift up their hands in the presence of God, and to address Him in the language of the modern Jew, "We are thy people, the children of thy covenant." They are implicitly directed to copy, with a confident front, an ancient example of prayer recorded by Saint Luke, an example, which tho' imitated by many, is avowed by few. The purport of their language must be, we thank thee, O God! that we are not as the children of other men, who are not interested in thy covenant, having no share in thy promises, or any right in thy confirming seal," "We contemplate with peculiar pleasure, the vast difference there is between us and the offspring of our profligate neighbours—the publicans." Now as these are the genuine consequences of your dictates on the subject, I may venture to appeal to the impartial reader, and ask, whether such sentiments imbibed by the children of Godly parents, are not adapted to harden their consciences in an unregenerated state, and to render them easy, under a vain supposition of there being from their earliest infancy, the favourites of heaven? When the last messenger knocks at the door, how fre-

quently does the man who has given the flood-tide of his affections to the world, console himself with the thought, that he was born of christian parents, had the seal of the covenant administered to him, by which he was made in *some sense* a saint—and that, although his life has not been so correct as it ought to have been, yet he has all along been a professing christian, and as God is merciful he hopes all will be well at last? It must be confessed, this is a lamentable preparation for the awfulness of eternity! yet, is it not just such a preparation as meets our every day observation? And is there no crime think you, in thus strewing the path to immortality, with promises the most delusory? For if circumcision availeth nothing, nor uncircumcision, but a new creature; if federal holiness confers no real spiritual blessings on its possessors; if the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile is broken down; if all are by nature the children of wrath; if God has concluded all under sin, that he might have mercy upon all through the same means; where is the boasted difference between the children of believers and those of unbelievers?

The law of the Lord, upon this interesting subject has long since gone forth to the world. "Think not to say within yourselves, we have Abraham to our father, the axe is laid to the root of the tree, every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down and cast into the fire." The blood of Christ in one view, and his spirit in another, are the only seals of that covenant which includes all our salvation. And, as by the former the covenant itself, was most solemnly ratified. So, by the latter our invisible interest in it, is ascertained. Math. xxvi c. 25, Heb ix c. 16, 17 v. Eph. i c. 13 v. and iv c. 30 v. Hence repentance towards God, and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ are the only means by which a sinner becomes interested in the blessings of the covenant of Grace.

Yours, &c.

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LETTER IV.

SIR,—

As the precepts of our Lord, respecting baptism are confessedly contained in Math. xxviii c. 19 and 20 v. if infant baptism is not taught here, we search the scriptures for it in vain. The divine command is, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you." Upon these words, page 19 you remark, "The word teach in the original means to make Disciples or learn; and children are capable in this sense of be

ing made Disciples; nay, the children of believing parents under the gospel, are called Disciples expressly, Acts xv. c. 10 v. Now Sir, I can scarcely persuade myself, that the most superficial observer can be at any loss, to understand the meaning of this text. The persons who are commanded to be baptized, are such as are capable of *understanding, believing and obeying* the gospel. They were first to be taught or made Disciples by teaching; and then taught to observe all things whatsoever Christ had commanded. Besides the word *Disciple* in the New Testament is equivalent to the term *Christian*. Act ix c. 26 v. Mr. Wilson explains the term Disciple, to mean "a learner, or scholar who submitteth to another to be taught any learning, Acts xx. c. 30 v. Mat. ix. 2 v. One who learneth the doctrine of Christ, that he may believe and practise it. Acts ix. c. 16 v. Luke xiv. c. 16 v. See Christian Dict. Article Disciple. If then, the infants you baptise are not christians, the words of Christ in this passage afford no ground for their baptism. Dr. Campbell's translation and note on this text, clearly confirms the view I have given of it. Matth. xxviii. c. 19 v. "Go therefore, *convert* all the nations, baptising them, &c." Then follows the note. "There are manifestly three things which our Lord here distinctly enjoins his Apostles to execute with regard to the nations, to wit—to convert them to the faith—to initiate the converts into the church by baptism—and to instruct the baptised in all the duties of the christian life." If the reader chooses to see this point more largely discussed and incontestible proved he may have recourse to Dr. Gal in whose learned reflections he will find Greek classics, ancient Fathers, numerous Oriental and European versions of the text, modern critics, and various Lexicographers, all uniting in our favour. Lett. 7, 8.

In page 15, you have said, "Children of believers under the gospel are called disciples expressly, Acts xv. c. 10 v. Now, therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our Fathers nor we were able to bear. The yoke here mentioned was circumcision which was appointed to be administered to infant children, here called Disciples; and as they are capable of being admitted as learners in the school of Christ' &c. Not to mention the absurdity of speaking of the capability of infants such as you baptise, of being admitted as learners in the school of Christ, where, I would ask, has God commanded the infant children of Gentiles to be circumcised, for these were the infants that you say were here called Disciples! If any credit is due to the inspired Author of this book, the infants which you say are called Disciples, were those who from among the Gentiles were turned to God, 19 v. They were brethren, capable of being taught, for we are told, verse 1st, "And certain men which came down from Judas, taught the brethren and said, except ye be circumcised and keep

the Law of Moses, ye cannot be saved." This exceedingly troubled the Gentile churches : whereupon a deputation was sent to Jerusalem to enquire about this matter. " And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up and said unto them, men and brethren, ye know that a great while ago, God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the gospel and believe. And God, which knoweth the hearts, bear them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us; and put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith." " Now therefore, why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the Disciples." The sum of Peter's argument is this, seeing God has given the Holy Ghost to the Gentiles, having purified their hearts by faith; why tempt ye God to put a yoke upon the neck of these Disciples, whose hearts are thus purified? This yoke you say was circumcision; but if circumcision was that unbearable yoke, how did it happen to be so profitable every way to ancient Israel as you represent it, page 18? The Epistle of Paul to the Galatians having been written for the express purpose of overturning the doctrine of those men, who taught the Disciples, that unless they were circumcised, &c. they could not be saved. We may be able to learn from him what this yoke was, Gal. v. c. 1 verse. He exhorts to stand fast therefore, in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage. The yoke of bondage here spoken of, is I conceive the same with that to which Peter refers Acts xv. c. 10, v. This yoke so far from being circumcision, obviously consisted in that spirit of self-righteousness which led its possessor to seek justification by circumcision, and keeping the law of Moses, so says the Apostle, Gal. v. c. 2, 3, 4 verses. " Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; ye are fallen from grace." Here then we are plainly taught, that the yoke of bondage consists in seeking justification by the works of the law, or by anything else than the perfect righteousness of Christ. Salvation on any other terms, has always been a yoke of bondage, which no human being could bear. The rays of our own righteousness prove a covering, too superficial to screen us from the scorching eye of God out of Christ." It follows, therefore, that this yoke of bondage, stands directly opposed to the boundless, all-sufficiency of the atonement made by Jesus Christ, to the fulness and freeness of the salvation which the chief of sinners obtains, by faith in the divine testimony.

Your next arguments in favour of infant baptism, are taken from the baptism of households. In page 20 you affirm, " That the household of Lydia were baptised upon her faith, " whether

they were children or servants, or both or what their exact ages were, it is not said nor is it material. The story represents them as baptised upon her faith." You formerly supported the cause of infant baptism from federal holiness; but what kind of holiness could servants derive from their mistress, which would justly entitle them to baptism? Besides how could the Apostles in the case, dare to violate the last solemn command of their divine master, "Go ye therefore into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature; he that believeth and is baptised, shall be saved," See Mark, xvi. c. 45, 16 verses. If the baptism of persons who made no profession of faith, was not a gross violation of this precept, no language can express such a violation. It is evident therefore, that they were not baptised upon her faith. Besides we might with equal propriety affirm, that the household of the Jailor were saved upon his faith.

As you are pleased to consider the household of the Jailor, to have been baptised upon the same footing as the household of Lydia, I shall answer you by quoting from your Pædobaptist brethren. Doctor Whitby says, "And when she (Lydia) and these of her household were instructed in the christian faith, and in the nature of baptism required by it. She was baptised and her household." Paraph. on the place. Mr. Henry says, "He (the Jailor) believing in God with all his house. There were none in his house that refused to be baptised, and so made no jar in the harmony; but they were unanimous in embracing the gospel, which added much to the joy." Expos. on Acts, xvi. c. 34 v. see to the same effect Calvin's comments in lac. Dr. Hammond's Works, vol. i. p. 494. Dr. Doddridge's verses of 1 Corin. xvi. c. 15 v. and note on the place Lembrech Comt. in lac. System of div. B. 5. c. xxii. sect. 2. "The story of the Jailor," you say, "is to the same purpose. No mention is made of any one's believing, but the Jailor himself. But, if it should be said, do not the next words, He rejoiced believing God with all his house, import that all his family believed as well as he? It is answered that the words do not seem to say so when viewed in the original. For the Greek words, *egalliasato panoiski pepisteukos to Theo*," are literally rendered. He rejoiced in all his house having believed God." I reply to this in the words of the late A. McLean. See letter to Mr. Glass in opposition to the uncouth criticism, I shall demonstrate that the "adverb *panoiki* (of *pas* all and *orkos* house) is the same with *sempantio ko*, with all the house. This is clear from its undeniable sense in the passage where it occurs. The Seventy use this word in Exod. i. c. 1 v. Now these are the names of the children of Israel which came into Egypt. *ekaatos panoiki*. i. e. each man with his whole house." Or shall we say according to this criticism, that only the eleven patriarchs came into Egypt, that the journey was theirs, and that their families were left behind them? The same word occurs in Josephus Autog. c. iv. s. 4, where speaking of the Law respecting the offerings allotted for the Priests' maintenance he says, it was appointed, "that they (*panoiki*) with their families might eat them in the holy city. Should any one still imagine that these offerings pertained only to the priest himself, that this eating was his

and that none of his family partook with him. I refer him to the law itself of which Josephus is speaking, "In the most holy place shalt thou eat it, I have given them unto thee, and to thy sons, and to thy daughters with thee, by a statute for ever; every one that is clean in thy house shall eat of it. Num. xviii. c. 10. 20 v. This is clear beyond all dispute, that our translators have given the true meaning of the word, and that when a man does any thing *panoiki*, he does it in concert with a whole house, who are equally engaged therein with himself."

In page 21 you say, "we might reason in a similar way with respect to the household of Stephanus were it necessary, but shall only as to all these instances, ask, is it probable that there were no infant children in any of these families? We read when God smote the first-born of Egypt, there was not a house in which there was not one dead; consequently not a house in Egypt in which there was not a child;" Surely I and my Baptist brethren, must be stupid and incorrigible to withhold assent from such clear demonstration! For although the inspired Apostle has told us, that the household of Stephanus addressed themselves to the ministry of the saints,—that Lydia's household were comforted as brethren—that the word of the Lord was spoken to all the Jailor's house, and that they rejoiced believing in God as well as himself, 1 Cor. xvi. c. 15 v. Acts xvi. c. 32, 40 v. Yet after all this we must conclude that there were infants in these houses, who were baptised, because here was a whole nation with one *dead* in it, *that* dead being the first born, consequently a child!!! Would it not, Sir, be offering an insult to the common sense of mankind to say, that the *last* born even of every house must be an infant? Much more then must it be, to assert, that the first born of every house must be a child. Such flimsy reasoning strongly marks the weakness of your cause.

In page 22 you say, "I go on to consider the evidence which we have that infant baptism was the constant practise of the primitive Church from the Apostles time, which will still confirm the evidence, that it was their practice also. The first of those early writers whom I shall bring forward in evidence is Justin Martyr. He wrote about forty years after the Apostolic age, and says, 'We have not received the carnal but the spiritual circumcision by baptism,—and it is enjoined to all persons to receive it the same way.' He says also, "Several persons among us who were made disciples to Christ from their childhood, do continue uncorrupted, they are regenerated in the same way in which we have been regenerated, for they are washed with water (not sprinkled) in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." You appear to consider it plain from this passage, that the author believed baptism came in the place of circumcision. Now I consider myself warranted to form a very different conclusion. If circumcision was a carnal ordinance to the child of a Jew,—how, I ask, can you prove that baptism came to be any thing more to the child of a christian? And according to your own shewing page 14, "Circumcision was instituted for the same ends as baptism." I do not know of any means, by which a person can be said, to receive a spiritual ordinance, but by a spiritual discernment of its nature, 1 Cor. ii. 14 v. You say "that it is to be

observed here, that when he says, made disciples he uses the same words which is used in the circumcision, disciple all nations, baptizing them, &c." And how were the Apostles to make disciples of the nations? Was it not by instructing them in the doctrine of Christ, so as to lead them to receive the truth in the love of it? Nay, Christ prohibits the use of any other weapon, than the truth of regenerating mankind. And your author says that those who from their childhood were made disciples, were regenerated in the same way as the rest of their brethren; in consequence of which they were washed with water, and none but those who were so regenerated were commanded to be washed, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost.

The second writer you bring forward is Irenius. You find it necessary however, to introduce him by an apology, reminding your readers that he mentions infant baptism only transiently. But does he mention it at all? Certainly, if you are allowed to construe his words to suit your own purpose. "Speaking concerning Christ you tell us, he says, he came to save all persons by himself, who by him are regenerated, i. e. baptised into God, infants, little ones, youths and elderly persons." that he used the word regenerated to signify baptized is plain from his own words, when he says, when Christ gave his disciples the command of regenerating unto God, he said, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them.' Here it is plain he means the command of baptizing." So you and others have said, but as Irenius has not said so, I think that in justice, his words are to be understood in their proper meaning, especially when so understood they appear to be in harmony with the divine word, when on the contrary the construction you put on them, makes him speak a language at variance with the scripture. For if the command to regenerate be the command to baptise,—then baptism was the ground work the Apostles were to perform for the nations; whereas, baptism without regeneration is an empty sound. Christ he says, "Came to save all persons by himself, who by him are regenerated into God, infants, little ones, &c." this accords with what Christ so often taught, except a man be born again he cannot enter the kingdom of Heaven." Here, I ask; if Irenius does not teach the same doctrine John taught, when he said, that there were in the church babes, young men, and fathers? But they were babes, who had received the sincere milk of the word, and the infants or babes mentioned by Irenius, were regenerated. The command given the Apostles was strictly what Irenius calls it, a command to regenerate. Dr. Campbell calls it a command to convert which means the same thing. He says "Go convert all nations," &c. Now what would you think of the candour of that man, who in order to defend a certain hypothesis, affirmed that Dr. Campbell called baptism conversion? When you thought fit to appeal to the Fathers, why did you pass over the writers of the first century? Surely they are unexceptionable testimony on the case. I defy, however, you or any other person to show that christian writers either of the first or second century directly mention infant baptism. The writers of the first century who will be allowed to have been contemporaries with the Apostles are Barnabas, Hermas, Clemens, Romanus, Egnatius and Polycarp—yet not one of these speaks

of baptism being administered to infants. Barnabas mentions the persons baptized as, "putting their trust in the Cross," and as "going down into the water full of sins and pollutions, but coming up again bringing forth fruit in their hearts, the fear and hope which are in Jesus by the spirit," Epis. ix. Herman represents them as "having heard the word and being willing to be baptised in the name of the Lord, Part. lib. i. 5, 3. Justia Martyr, Atheangoras, Felix, Irenaeus and Clemens of Alexandria, constituted the christian writers of the second century, who so far from speaking directly of infant baptism, as an unquestioned practice, never once uttered a word upon the subject. In proof of this, I shall cite a few learned Pædobaptists, Curcellains says, "The baptism of infants in the first centuries after Christ, was altogether unknown; but in the third and fourth was allowed by some few. In the fifth and following ages it was generally received. The custom of baptising infants, did not begin before the third age after Christ was born. In the former ages no trace of it appears—and it was introduced without the command of Christ." Instit. Relig. Christ. l. i. c. xii. dis. sec. do Pen. Mg. s. 56.

The well known Mr. Chambers, says, "It appears that in the primitive times none were baptised but adults" Cyclopædia, Article baptism.

Dr. Holland informs us that, "In the first plantation of christianity amongst the Gentiles such only as were of full age, after they were instructed in the principles of the christian religion, were admitted to baptism." Dr. Wall's Hist. Inf. Bap. Part 2, c. ii. p. 281.

We are told by Johannes Bohemus that "Baptism of old was administered to none (unless upon urgent necessity) but such as were before instructed in the faith and catechised. But when it came to be judged necessary to everlasting life, it was ordained that infants should be baptised, and that they should have God-fathers and God-mothers, who should be sureties for infants and should renounce the devil on their behalf." See Lawson's Baptistmalogia, p. 88.

If these learned Authors (to whom many more might be added) have spoken the truth, what becomes of your learned conclusion, page 27, where you say, "It is as plain then as history can make it, that there had been no dispute about the point, and that there was not neither had been any sect of people professing christianity that denied it, from the Apostles time to that day. Nor is there the least evidence for eleven or twelve hundred years, that it was ever opposed by any man or society of men; nor indeed till the year 1522, except by a small number in France in the 12th century."

It could scarcely have been deemed credible that a *learned Doctor* of the nineteenth century would have staked his reputa-

tion for veracity, upon such an assertion as this, the truth of which any one acquainted with ecclesiastical History will be at no loss to determine. I would merely state in opposition to this precious piece of your church history that "Cattenburgh informs us that in the former part of the sixth century many opposed infant baptism" see Spiceley, Theol. Christ. iv. c. Lxiv. set. ii. s. 4. Dr. Allix says, that scarcely any man was ever so torn and defamed, on account of his doctrine as was this Arnold of Brescia. Among other things that were laid to his charge was this. He was unsound in his judgment about the sacrament of the altar, and infant baptism (in other words, he rejected the popish doctrine of transubstantiation, and of the baptism of infants.) Dr. Allix remarks p. 169. Jones in his history of the Waldenses tells us, "As the Papists of those times baptized by immersion, the Palerines by what name soever they were called as Manicheans, Gazari, Josephites, Passigines, &c. made no complaint of the mode of baptising, but when they were examined, they objected vehemently against the baptism of infants, and condemned it as an error. Among other things they said, that a child knew nothing of the matter, that he had a desire to be baptised, and was incapable of making any confession of faith, and that the willing and professing of another could be of no service to him." "Here then," says Dr. Allix very truly, "We have found a body of men in Italy, before the year one thousand and twenty-six, (five hundred years before the reformation) who believed contrary to the opinions of the church of Rome, and who highly condemned their errors." Atto, bishop of Verceulli had complained of such people eighty years before, and so had others before him, and there is the highest reason to believe, that they had always existed in Italy, nay they always existed for the Donatots long before this amounted to four hundred churches, all baptists. See Robertson's History of Baptism, p. 197. See also Mochenus church history, v. i. ii. cent. xii. part 2, c. v. Robinson's Ecl. Research. Lembrech's Hist. Inqus. L. i. c. viii. p. 31.

Yours, &c.

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LETTER V.

SIR,—

Although you must be conscious that the scriptures affords neither precept nor example for baptizing infants, still you attempt to prove it by way of consequence drawn from certain premises. You say in page 28, "A command may be as clearly inferred by way of consequence from certain premises as if it were in express words. A plain instance of this we have

In Paul and Barnabas, Acts xiii. 46 Lo. &c. Now the command they speak of is not at all express, but implicit; for what they call a command is a promise made to Christ: I have set thee to be a light to the Gentiles. This they consider to be an implicit command, directing them in the way of duty." Now, Sir, altho' we may indeed deduce moral duties from the nature and relation of things, yet positive ordinances (such as baptism) which depend entirely upon the will of the lawgiver, cannot be deduced in the same way; because we neither know to what description of persons they belong, nor any thing about them, except from the plain enacting words of the institutions, or from the approved examples of their application. And when both the institution itself, and its application are wanting, there can be no such thing as a *positive institution*. Besides, the Apostles had the express command of their divine master, to go and preach the gospel to every creature, he that believeth and is baptised, &c. Mark xvi. c. 16 v.

You go on to say, page 29, "Again the command that our Saviour gave, go and disciple all nations and baptize them, is a virtual, if not an express command to baptize the children of christian nations; for nations must include children, as you see in the promise made to Abraham, in thy seed shall all nations be blessed." The text, Sir, says nothing of children, nor of christian nations. Those who were to be baptised, were first to be taught or made *disciples*, then *baptised*. And even admitting that children were included in the promise made to Abraham, it will not follow that whenever the term *all nations* occurs in the New Testament, we are bound to consider it as including the millions of infants. The following example will show this to be the case, "Ye shall be hated of *all nations*. This gospel shall be preached for a witness unto *all nations*. Made known to *all nations*: My house shall be called of *all nations*, a house of prayer. Babylon is fallen, because she made *all nations* drink of the wine of the wrath of her fornication. By thy sorceries were *all nations* deceived. Matth. xxiv. c. 9 v, Rom. xvi c. 26 v, Mark xi c. 17 v—Rev. xiv c. 8 v, xv 4 v, xviii 2 and 3 v—Rom. xv c. 11 v—Zach. xiv. c. 2 v—Mal. iii c. 12 v, with many others.

The next virtual command for baptizing infants you find in Acts ii c. 39 v. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children." "The exhortation there to the Jews is a virtual, if not an express command to baptise their children." Now the question is what was the promise here referred to, and to whom was it made? The prophet Joel answers this question, "And it shall come to pass afterwards, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men see visions, and also upon the servants, and upon the handmaidens in these

days will I pour out my spirit." As the promise referred to by Peter was not baptism, but the out-pouring of the spirit, the children that Peter mentions must be the same as the sons and daughters spoken of by Joel.

In page 30, you ask with an air of triumph, "Where is the express command for female communicating? It must therefore be a very foolish cavil to say, that there is no express command to baptize infants." I would beg to answer this, by asking, if Paul does not enjoin a reception of the sacred supper by females, when he says, "Let a man examine himself and so let him eat? Does not the term *Anthropos* there used, often stand as a name of our species, without regard to sex? Have we not the authority of Lexicographers,* nay what is incomparably better, have we not the sanction of common sense, for understanding the word thus, in this passage? When the sexes are distinguished and opposed the word for man is not *Anthropos*, but *Aner*. Besides, when the Apostle delivered to the church at Corinth, what he had received of the Lord. Did he not deliver a command,—a command to the whole church which consisted of women as well as men?

You then proceed and say, "We may now ask what command have Anabaptists for their practice? Where is the passage in all the Book of God that tells us that baptism must be confined to adults?" So then, Sir, in order to defend your favourite hypothesis, you have adopted a kind of interrogatory which saps the foundation of almost every precept in the Bible. Where is the passage in all the Book of God that tells us not to baptise Bells as the Papists do? By such a mode of arguing all the superstition and will worship, that ever disgraced the church could be defended. The Anabaptists as you call them, are contented to practice, what Christ commanded when he said, "Go teach all nations baptizing them," &c.

In page 31 you say, "But supposing there is no express mention made in the history of the New Testament of one infant baptism, yet no man has any right to conclude from hence, that in fact there was none; for if so, we might as well conclude that there were whole churches, that never were baptized. There is no express mention in the history of the New Testament that the churches of Antioch or Iconium of the Romans, Galatians, &c. were ever baptised." What a powerful argument this would be for a Papist to defend the baptism of Bells? Besides between the two cases, there is no analogy. The apostle has an express command to baptize believers, and there is no reason to doubt of their faithful discharge of it, while it is universally

* Parkhurst says, *Anthropos* is a name of the species without regard to sex.

admitted, that there is neither precept nor example in the word of God, for the baptism of infants.

But you further say, "If they would give a scripture example of their own present practice, they must give an instance of a person born and brought up of christian parents or baptised parents, that was baptised in adult years. The doing of this would be some evidence, that infant baptism was not in practice." By this it would appear that the express command, and the plain example of the Apostles, will not satisfy you. "If they hear not Moses, and the Prophets, neither will they be persuaded though one rose from the dead. The history of the New Testament was not written to give us an account of all the baptisms which took place among the primitive christians, nor to inform us who, or what their parents were. In the Acts of the Apostles, however, we are expressly informed, "That those who believed were baptised,—and those who gladly received the word were baptised—that they were baptised both men and women."

If we were to write a very concise history of the churches of our denomination, and could forget that any controversy had ever arisen on the subject of baptism, we should I apprehend, describe the addition of members in such terms as the Apostles did, because those terms would exactly describe the fact. If you however, or your friends, under similar circumstances, were to describe the additions made to your church, you would I imagine, be obliged to use such phraseology as this, "Those of them who believed, and who were not baptised in infancy, were baptised and added to the church,—men, women and their infant offspring were baptised. I mean to state it fairly and would be sorry to do otherwise, but I am not aware how else the fact could be correctly described. If scripture phraseology serves to describe our practice, and will not without alteration serve to describe yours. I think it affords no inconsiderable proof, that our practice is the same as that described in holy writ. Besides, if the addition of the word *infant* and *infant offspring* be necessary to describe your practice, and the inspired penman has not made those additions. How daring must it be for any one to understand it so, with the solemn admonition of the wise man sounding in his ears "add then not to his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar," with the not less alarming announcement of the venerable Apostle John, when about to close the volume of divine Revelation, "Whosoever addeth to the words of the prophecy of this Book, God shall add to him, the plagues, that are written therein, &c."

In page 33 speaking of infants you say, "Again they are capable of being laid under obligations of duty to God, to be performed when grown up, as the children of the Jews were, and the Apostle says expressly, I testify to every man that is circumcised that he is a debtor to do the whole law. And why are not

children now as capable of the baptismal obligations to the law of Christ, as the circumcised children of the Jews were of being debtors to the law of Moses." If circumcision or baptism lays those to whom it is administered, under obligations to keep the whole law, which they were not naturally bound to do; so far is circumcision from being so profitable every way as you affirm, that on the contrary, it must be a serious injury, seeing the condition of the children of unbelieving heathens are vastly superior since they are under no obligation to keep the law, for where there is no law, there is no transgression. But a little attention to the scope of the Apostle's reasoning upon this subject, will clearly demonstrate that he is not speaking to the Jews, nor of the superior obligations, which circumcision entailed upon their offspring to keep the whole law. He is manifestly addressing the church of Galatia, the members of which, who from among the Gentiles were turned to God, were in danger of being turned from the simplicity of the truth by those men who taught them, that unless they were circumcised and kept the law, they could not be saved. Hence says the Apostle, "Behold I Paul, say unto you, that if ye be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ has become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law, ye are fallen from grace." Here we are plainly taught, that the man who dares to add his own obedience to the perfect work of the divine Redeemer, in order to obtain justification, thereby falls from Grace; he renounces his dependence upon him, who is the end of the law for righteousness, to every one that believeth, he becomes a debtor to do the whole law, and nothing but absolute obedience can deliver him from its curse. If this be the plain and obvious meaning of the Apostle's words, what can we think of the man who so shamefully perverts them to support his own cause?

In page 37 you say, "I observe that there is neither scripture precept nor example for dipping, and if so, we must be warranted in maintaining that such a mode is not necessary. With respect to precept nothing can be produced but the original institution. Teach and baptize. The original words the Anabaptists tell us, *always* signifies, to immerse, dip or plunge the whole person under water. But this is not a matter of fact, but a glaring untruth." Was this sentence written in the full spirit of that charity, which suffereth long and is kind; which rejoiceth not in iniquity but rejoiceth in the truth? Before you wrote it, it was proper for you to consider whether, the charge of untruth might not be recoiled back upon yourself. Those who can believe what you so positively advance here, must have more faith in your declarations than I have; and believe me, I have yet to learn, who those Anabaptists are, who tell us that the original

word for baptism, *always* signifies to *immerse*, *dip* or *plunge* the whole person under water. A delicacy for affirming on your own authority what you might easily have proved had it been so, might have induced you to favour us with your Anabaptist authors, who told you what you have stated. The baptists indeed say, that the primary meaning of the word in question does signify to *immerse*, ————— and in this opinion they are supported by Lexicographers, modern critics, and a vast number of your ablest Pædobaptist critics. The first I shall produce is the well known Dr. Campbell, principal of the Marshal College, Aberdeen who says, "We have deserted the Greek names where the Latins have deserted them, and have adopted them, where the Latins adopted them. Hence we say, circumcision and not pertitomy, and we do not say immersion, but baptism, yet when the language furnishes us with materials for a version so exact and analogical, such a version conveys the sense more perspicuously than a foreign name. For this reason I should think the word immersion (which though of Latin origin is an English name, regularly formed from the verb to immerse) a better English name than baptism were we now at liberty to make a choice. Preim Dis. vol iii. p. 28. Calvin says, "The word baptize signifies to immerse, and the rite of immersion was observed by the ancient church." Instit. Christ. Relig. i. iv. c. xv. s. 19. Beza says, "Christ commanded us to be baptised, by which word it is certain immersion is signified." Epis. ii. ad. Thom. Teburn (assad Spanheim. Dal. Evang. Pars. iii. Dub. 24. Vetrunga says, "The act of baptising is the immersion of believers in water. This expresses the force of the word. Thus also it was performed by Christ and his Apostles." Aphoris Sauct. Theol. Aphor. 884. Kimbroch says, "Baptism is that right or ceremony of the new covenant, whereby the faithful by immersion into water as by a sacred pledge are assured of the favour of God." Div. B. v. c. xxii sect 1. The sensible remarks of Dr. Robertson will form an appropriate conclusion to this part of our subject, "Whether" says he "John the Baptist and the Apostles of our Blessed Lord, baptized by pouring on water, or by bathing in water is, to be determined chiefly, though not wholly by ascertaining the precise meaning of the word, *baptize*. A linguist determines himself, by his own knowledge of the Greek language, and an illiterate man, by the best evidence he can obtain from the testimony of others. To the latter it is sufficient to observe, that the word is confessedly Greek. That native Greeks must understand their own language better than foreigners, and that they have always understood the word baptism to signify dipping, and therefore, from their first embracing christianity to this day they have always baptised by immersion. This is an authority for the meaning of the word infinitely preferable to that of European Lexicographers, so that a man, who is obliged to trust human testimony, and who baptizes by immersion because the Greeks do, understands a Greek word exactly as the Greeks themselves understand it, and in this case the Greeks are unexceptionable guides, and their practice is in this instance, safe ground of action." History of baptism, p. 5. If

then, I have spoken wickedly for God, in maintaining that the original word is immerse, I am not alone, nor have I reason to be ashamed of my companions, for they were men who could both read and understand Greek. From their opinions, therefore, in connection with the practice of the Apostles, Acts viii. c. 38 39 verses, I am bound to conclude that there are both scripture precept and example for baptising by immersion.

That baptism by immersion was the practice of the Apostles and primitive churches for several ages, we have the testimony of many learned Pædobaptists, Dr. Whitby says, "It being so expressly declared here (Rom. vi. 4) and Colos. ii. c. 12 v. that we are buried with Christ in baptism, by being buried under water. And the arguments to oblige us to a conformity to his death by dying to sin, being taken hence, and this immersion being religiously observed by all christians for thirteen centuries" Note on Rom. vi c. 4 v. Mosheim says, "the sacrament of baptism was administered in this (the second) century without the public assemblies, in places appointed and prepared for that purpose, and was performed by immersion of the whole body in the baptismal font" Eccles. Hist. Cent. i. part i c. iii. s. 3.

Mr. Joseph Mede says, "There was no such thing as sprinkling or Rantismos used in baptism in the Apostles' days, nor many ages after them." Discourse on Tit. iii c 5 v, work p. 63, Edit. 1677. The assembly of divines say, "Were baptised. Washed by dipping in Jordan" as Mark vii c 4 v, Heb. ix c 10 v "Buried with him by baptism," see Col. ii c 12. "In this phrase the Apostle seemeth to allude to the ancient manner of baptism, which was to dip the parties baptised, and as it were to bury them under the water for a while, and then to draw them out of it and lift them up, to represent the burial of our old man, and our restoration to newness of life," Annot. on Matthew iii c 6 v, and Rom. vi c 4 v. Calvin says "From these words, John iii c 23 v. it may be inferred, that baptism was administered by John and Christ by plunging the whole body under water. Here we perceive how baptism was administered among the ancients, for they immersed the whole body in water. In Joan. iii c 23,—Com't in Acts viii c 38. See also Limbroch's Div. B v c xxvii sect. 1. Abp. Usher sum and substance of Relig. p. 413. Doddrige's expos. Matthew iii c 16.

Here we have a number of men eminent for their piety and solid learning, who appear to testify what they know, and what they believed, concerning an ancient fact, an acquaintance with which, involves not a little the purity of a divine institution of our Lord, and consequently an obedience to it. These opinions were chiefly delivered concerning the question, whether John the Baptist and the Apostles of Christ administered baptism by immersion? A question which is directly and intimately connected with the manner in which this holy rite is now to be ad-

ministered, because in whatever way these venerable men and lights of the world performed this institution we are bound to believe that *that* was the proper way, for they had too much knowledge, and too much integrity to administer this branch of holy worship in an improper manner. Besides, they were not ignorant, that their practice in this respect, was to be viewed as a pattern, and to be considered as a guide by succeeding disciples of Christ. Moreover the character and profession of those authors who have thus given their opinions on this important subject leave no room for suspecting that they were biased in favour of baptists, because it is obvious that if their judgment could be under the influence of predilection, it must have been on the opposite side. Many of them also, are beyond the reach of suspicion with regard to their knowledge of ecclesiastical antiquities. If then, the primary meaning of the original word be *immerse*, and if the apostles baptised by immersion, it follows that we may not only fearlessly but triumphantly claim scripture precept, and apostolic example for our practice, and with these upon our side we may very innocently give all your liberal doubts and insurmountable impossibilities to the winds, for having destroyed your foundation, the whole structure must fall to the ground.

In page 46, 5 place, speaking of John's Baptism, you say, "It would seem therefore, that the people stood in rank near to or just within the edge of the river, and John passing by, before them cast, or sprinkled water upon their heads or faces with his hands." The pen of inspiration certainly gives a very different account of the matter; for we are told Matth. iii c. 6 v. that they, "were baptised of him in Jordan confessing their sins." And Mark tells us i c 5 9 v. that "there went out unto him all the land of Judea and of Jerusalem, and were all baptised of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins." And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth, of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan v. 10, and straightway coming up out of the water, &c. In Acts viii c 38, 39 v. speaking of the Eunnuch it is said, "And he commanded the chariot to stand still, and they went down, both into the water, both Phillip and the Eunnuch; and he baptised him. And when they were come up out of the water, &c." Now if language can convey ideas certainly these verses convey an idea very different from that of a number of persons standing upon the bank of a river, and having water sprinkled upon them, for it is plainly said, that they went **DOWN INTO THE WATER** and **CAME UP OUT OF IT**, a thing which no man in his senses would do for the purpose of being sprinkled. See Dr. Whitby's comment on the place. The words of Doctor Sherlock with respect to expounding scripture will be very applicable here. "In expounding scripture we must confine ourselves to the plain and natural signification of the word. It is impossible to prove that that is not the sense of scripture, which is the natural interpretation of the words of any one text, and is not contradicted by any other text. When the words are plain and obvious nothing can tempt any man to reject the plain sense of the word, for some obscure labourer

and artificial interpretation, but a dislike of the doctrine which the plain sense of the word teaches." See Scripture proofs of our Saviour's divinity, p. 64, 65.

In your fourth argument you labour to prove, "that immersion is dangerous to health, and even life itself." I shall answer this by quoting from Dr. Wall, one of your own learned brethren, who says, "All the christians in Asia, all in Africa, and about one third part in Europe, are of the last sort (i. e.) practice immersion, in which third part in Europe are comprehended the christians of Græcia, Thracia, Servia, Bulgaria, Rascia, Wallachia, Moldavia, Russia, Nigra, and so on, and even Muscovites, who if coldness of the country will excuse, might plead for a dispensation with the most reason of any." History of Infant Baptism, part ii chapter ix page 477.

To crown all, and to furnish a lasting monument of our infamy, you add, "As for chastity would it not be a great scandal in the face of a congregation, where alone sacraments can be duly celebrated for men and women to stand up naked or in a dress bordering upon nakedness," and again, "To suppose them dipped naked as the most of the ancient dippers, we are told did, is contrary to all civility and modesty. It is true, it was a part of the Anabaptist scheme as taught by David George to look upon one another's nakedness without any carnal emotions." The vile manner in which you make these statements is too palpable to escape observation. You say, "For men and women to stand up naked," and then qualify it by saying, "or in a dress bordering upon nakedness." Now why not be candid enough to say that the extent of the scandal was to stand in the kind of dress you mentioned, as the qualification?

Your book was written I believe, with a view to counteract the influence of the Baptist cause, in this settlement, or at furthest, the Baptist cause of the present day. Now I conceive, that candour, nay truth required, that you should have spoken of the indelicacy of the practice of adult baptism, from your own observation, or at least from a knowledge of the manner in which it is now practised, instead of having recourse to the slanderous imputations here advanced. Where are we told, that the ancient dippers did it, in the manner you state? If you were supporting the cause of truth by truth itself, you had the law and the testimony; when you leave these, however, and bring forward such gross, indelicate insinuations to overturn your adversary, it must give your readers a very high idea of the chaste tenor of your own mind. If the Baptists act contrary to scripture, you had ample scope for showing it, and christian charity required of you, to presume, that Baptists as a sincere denomi-

nation of christians, performed what they conceived, and what is a christian rite, in a becoming manner, and you ought to have shown, not insinuated the contrary by such vileness.

Any one who has witnessed, in the spirit of the gospel, the immersion of an adult, of either sex, can bear testimony as to its outward propriety and delicacy. And in conclusion, I cannot help remarking, how unlike a gentleman and scholar (not to mention a christian) it was for one, who supposed he had over-
turned his antagonists, by scripture proof and fair reasoning to pollute his pages with arguments deduced from indelicacy, stated in the most invidious and disgusting terms.

Sincerely wishing you may give the subject due consideration, and cherish a more candid and christian like spirit—

I remain your well-wisher.



FEB 21/29.

